

## STENT TO BE DEPLOYED ON A BEND

### Background of the Invention

5                   Stents are placed or implanted within a variety of bodily vessels including in coronary arteries, renal arteries, peripheral arteries including illiac arteries, arteries of the neck and cerebral arteries, veins, biliary ducts, urethras, fallopian tubes, bronchial tubes, the trachea, the esophagus and the prostate.

                    Stents are available in a wide range of designs. One popular stent design  
10 includes a plurality of serpentine rings having alternating turns. The rings are made of interconnected struts. Adjacent rings are interconnected via connecting elements.

                    Generally, when stents are deployed in areas of high curvature they are bent so that the struts on the outside of the curve are farther apart than those on the inside of the curve. This arrangement typically provides poor scaffolding on the outside  
15 of the bend and/or possibly result in overlapping struts on the inside of the bend.

                    There remains a need for stents which provide adequate scaffolding in areas of high curvature.

                    Without limiting the scope of the invention a brief summary of some of the claimed embodiments of the invention is set forth below. Additional details of the  
20 summarized embodiments of the invention and/or additional embodiments of the invention may be found in the Detailed Description of the Invention below.

                    A brief abstract of the technical disclosure in the specification is provided as well for the purposes of complying with 37 C.F.R. 1.72.

                    All US patents and applications and all other published documents  
25 mentioned anywhere in this application are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

### Summary of the Invention

                    In one embodiment, a stent may comprise a first segment having a  
30 plurality of closed serpentine circumferential bands. Adjacent closed serpentine circumferential bands may be connected to one another. Each closed serpentine circumferential band may have a plurality of struts, each strut having a length, and the struts which are circumferentially adjacent to one another may be connected one to the

other by a turn. The struts may generally increase in length from a minimum strut length to a maximum strut length, and then may generally decrease in length from the maximum strut length to the minimum strut length as the circumferential band is traversed in its entirety in a clockwise direction. Desirably, the struts of maximum  
5 length in the closed serpentine bands may be generally longitudinally aligned with one another.

In another embodiment, an unexpanded stent may comprise a plurality of interconnected struts disposed in a tubular structure. The tubular structure may include a first portion and a second portion, each portion including struts which generally  
10 increase in length to a maximum length and then generally decrease in length to a minimum length as the stent is traversed circumferentially about a longitudinal axis. A maximum length strut of the first portion may be longitudinally aligned with a maximum length strut of the second portion. The first portion may be proximal to the second portion.

15 In another embodiment, a stent may comprise a plurality of interconnected struts defining a wall surface. The wall surface may include a segment having a strip extending from one end of the segment to the other end of the segment, and extending over a portion of the circumference of the stent. The strip may have a plurality of rows of interconnected struts which are of greater length than the remaining  
20 struts of the segment.

In another embodiment, a stent may comprise a plurality of interconnected struts defining a wall surface. The wall surface may include a segment having a strip extending from one end of the segment to the other end of the segment and extending over a portion of the circumference of the stent. The strip may have a  
25 plurality of rows of interconnected struts which are of greater flexibility than the remaining struts of the segment.

Additional details and/or embodiments of the invention are discussed below.

30 These and other embodiments which characterize the invention are pointed out with particularity in the claims annexed hereto and forming a part hereof. However, for a better understanding of the invention, its advantages and objectives obtained by its use, reference should be made to the drawings which form a further part

hereof and the accompanying descriptive matter, in which there are illustrated and described various embodiments of the invention.

Brief Description of the Figures

5                      Figure 1 shows a flat pattern design of an embodiment of an inventive stent.

                        Figure 2 shows another flat pattern design of an embodiment of an inventive stent.

                        Figure 3 shows another flat pattern design of an embodiment of an  
10                      inventive stent.

                        Figure 4 shows another flat pattern design of an embodiment of an inventive stent.

                        Figure 5 shows another flat pattern design of an embodiment of an inventive stent.

15                      Figure 6 shows another flat pattern design of an embodiment of an inventive stent.

                        Figure 7 shows another flat pattern design of an embodiment of an inventive stent.

                        Figure 8 shows another flat pattern design of an embodiment of an  
20                      inventive stent.

                        Figure 9 shows another flat pattern design of an embodiment of an inventive stent.

                        Figure 10 shows another flat pattern design of an embodiment of an inventive stent.

25                      Figure 11 shows another flat pattern design of an embodiment of an inventive stent.

                        Figure 12 shows another flat pattern design of an embodiment of an inventive stent.

30                      Figure 13 shows an embodiment of an inventive stent deployed in a curved vessel.

### Detailed Description of the Invention

This invention may be embodied in many different forms. This description is an exemplification of the principles of the invention and is not intended to limit the invention to the particular embodiments illustrated.

5 For the purposes of this disclosure, unless otherwise indicated, identical reference numerals used in different figures refer to the same component.

In one embodiment, the invention is directed to a stent, such as that shown at 100 in Fig. 1, comprising a plurality of interconnected closed serpentine circumferential bands 110. Adjacent closed serpentine circumferential bands 110 may be connected to one another by at least one connecting element 118. Each closed  
10 serpentine circumferential band 110 comprises a plurality of struts 112. Struts 112 which are circumferentially adjacent to one another are connected to one another by a turn 114. The length of the struts 112 within a band 110 generally increases in length from a minimum strut length to a maximum strut length and then generally decreases in  
15 length from the maximum length to the minimum length as the circumferential band is traversed in its entirety in a clockwise direction. A strut of maximum length is shown at 112b while a strut of minimum length is shown at 112a. The term 'generally increasing' allows for the possibility that some adjacent struts 112 are of the same length or within manufacturing tolerances of one another. Similarly, the term 'generally decreasing'  
20 allows for the possibility that some adjacent struts 112 are of the same length or within manufacturing tolerances of one another. Desirably, the struts 112 continually increase in length over a portion of the circumferential band 110 and then continually decrease in length over the remaining portion of the circumferential band 110. The term  
'continually increase' requires that each strut 112 in the direction of increasing length be  
25 longer than the previous strut 112. The term 'continually decrease' requires that each strut 112 in the direction of decreasing length be shorter than the previous strut 112. Adjacent bands 110 are connected one to the other via one or more connectors 116.

Each band of the stent will have a distribution of struts ranging from a smallest strut to a largest strut. The distribution of struts may be the same in each band  
30 or may differ in one or more of the bands. Thus, the maximum strut length of the struts of a first circumferential band may or may not be the same as the maximum strut length of the struts of a second circumferential band. Similarly, the minimum strut length of the struts of a first circumferential band may or may not be the same as the minimum

strut length of the struts of the second circumferential band. In some embodiments, the number of struts per band may differ between some of the bands. Also, the range of strut width within a band may differ among some of the bands.

Typically, as shown in Fig. 1, the struts of maximum length 112b in the closed serpentine circumferential bands 110 are generally longitudinally aligned with one another. For the purposes of this disclosure, two struts 112 are in general longitudinal alignment with each other if a line which is parallel to the longitudinal axis of the stent can be drawn between the two struts 112. The line may be straight in the case of a stent without curvature or may be curved in the case of a stent with curvature.

As shown in Fig. 1, each closed serpentine circumferential band 110 has a first end 120 and a second end 122, and the turns 114 at only one of the first and second ends are in general circumferential alignment. The turns 114 at the other end are generally not in circumferential alignment. For the purposes of the disclosure, turns 114 are in circumferential alignment if they extend to the same longitudinal extent along the length of the stent 100. All of the bands 110 may be similarly oriented as shown in Fig. 1 so that the unaligned end of one band 110 faces the aligned end of a directly adjacent band 110.

It is also within the scope of the invention, as shown in Fig. 2, for some of the bands 110 to be oriented in one direction and for other bands 110a to be oriented in the opposite direction. For example, in the stent 100 of Fig. 2, the bands 110 located toward the proximal end 130 of the stent 100 have unaligned second ends 122, while the bands 110a located toward the distal end 132 of the stent have unaligned first ends 120. As shown, bands 110 and bands 110a are oppositely oriented. Thus, in the middle of the stent 100, there may be a first serpentine band 110 adjacent to a second serpentine band 110a, wherein the non-aligned turns 114 of the first serpentine band 110 face the non-aligned turns 114 of the second serpentine band 110a.

It is further within the scope of the invention for the closed serpentine bands 110 to have non-aligned turns 114 at both the first end 120 and the second end 122, as shown by way of example in Fig. 3.

In another embodiment as shown at 100 in Fig. 4, the invention is directed to a stent comprising a plurality of interconnected serpentine circumferential bands 110. Adjacent closed serpentine circumferential bands 110 may be connected to one another by at least one connecting element 118.

Each serpentine circumferential band 110 may have a first end 120 and a second end 122, and may comprise a plurality of struts 112. Struts 112 which are circumferentially adjacent to one another are connected to one another by a turn 114. The length of the struts 112 within a band 110 generally increases in length from a minimum strut length 112a to a maximum strut length 112b and then generally decreases in length from the maximum length 112b to the minimum length 112a as the circumferential band 110 is traversed in its entirety in a clockwise direction.

Each circumferential band 110 within a stent 100 may have struts 112 that vary in length as compared to other circumferential bands 110 within the stent 100. Thus, the maximum strut length 112b of a first circumferential band 110 may or may not be the same as the maximum strut length 112b of a second circumferential band 110. Similarly, the minimum strut length 112a of a first circumferential band 110 may or may not be the same as the minimum strut length 112a of a second circumferential band 110. In some embodiments, the maximum strut length 112b of a first circumferential band 110 may be the same as or even shorter than the minimum strut length 112a of a second circumferential band 110.

As shown in Figure 4, all of the turns 114 at the proximal end 130 of a stent 100 may be in general circumferential alignment with one another. All of the turns 114 at the distal end 132 of a stent 100 may be in general circumferential alignment with one another. Interior turns 114, which are not located at either the proximal end 130 or the distal end 132 of the stent 100, may be out of circumferential alignment with other interior turns 114 that are located on the same side 120, 122 of the same serpentine circumferential band 110.

As shown in Figure 4, an inventive stent 100 may include a strip or backbone section 140. Desirably, a strip 140 comprises a zone extending across at least a portion of the length of the stent 100 and across at least a portion of the circumference of the stent 100. In some embodiments, all struts 112 located within a strip 140 may comprise maximum length struts 112b. In some embodiments, a strip 140 may contain all of the maximum length struts 112b included in a stent 100.

In some embodiments, such as shown in Figure 4, a strip may include all of the connecting elements 118 of the stent 100.

When an inventive stent 100 is deployed on a curve, desirably the stent 100 will be positioned having a strip 140 located at the outside of the curve.

In another embodiment as shown at 100 in Fig. 5, the invention is directed to a stent comprising a plurality of interconnected serpentine circumferential bands 110. Adjacent closed serpentine circumferential bands 110 may be connected to one another by a plurality of connecting elements 118.

5           Each serpentine circumferential band 110 may have a first end 120 and a second end 122, and may comprise a plurality of struts 112. Struts 112 which are circumferentially adjacent to one another are connected to one another by a turn 114. The length of the struts 112 within a band 110 generally increases in length from a minimum strut length 112a to a maximum strut length 112b and then generally  
10 decreases in length from the maximum length 112b to the minimum length 112a as the circumferential band 110 is traversed in its entirety in a clockwise direction.

          Each circumferential band 110 within a stent 100 may have struts 112 that vary in length as compared to other circumferential bands 110 within the stent 100. Thus, the maximum strut length 112b of a first circumferential band 110 may or may  
15 not be the same as the maximum strut length 112b of a second circumferential band 110. Similarly, the minimum strut length 112a of a first circumferential band 110 may or may not be the same as the minimum strut length 112a of a second circumferential band 110. In some embodiments, the maximum strut length 112b of a first circumferential band 110 may be the same as or even shorter than the minimum strut length 112a of a  
20 second circumferential band 110.

          All of the turns 114 at the proximal end 130 of a stent 100 may be in general circumferential alignment with one another. All of the turns 114 at the distal end 132 of a stent 100 may be in general circumferential alignment with one another. Interior turns 114, which are not located at either the proximal end 130 or the distal end  
25 132 of the stent 100, may be out of circumferential alignment with other interior turns 114 that are located on the same side 120, 122 of the same serpentine circumferential band 110.

          Each connecting element 118 may be connected at one end to a turn 114 of a first serpentine circumferential band 110 and may be connected at the other end to a  
30 turn 114 of an adjacent serpentine circumferential band 110. As shown in Figure 5, the length of circumferentially adjacent connecting elements 118 may vary. In some embodiments, the length of the connector struts 118 between two adjacent serpentine circumferential bands 110 may generally increase in length from a minimum connecting

element length 118a to a maximum connecting element length 118b, and then generally decrease in length from the maximum connecting element length 118b to the minimum connecting element length 118a about the circumference of the stent 100. In some embodiments, the length of the connecting elements 118 may be inversely proportional to the length of struts 112 located adjacent to the connecting elements 118.

In another embodiment as shown at 100 in Fig. 6, the invention is directed to a stent comprising a plurality of interconnected serpentine circumferential bands 110. Adjacent closed serpentine circumferential bands 110 may be connected to one another by a plurality of connecting elements 118.

Each serpentine circumferential band 110 may have a first end 120 and a second end 122, and may comprise a plurality of struts 112. Struts 112 which are circumferentially adjacent to one another are connected to one another by a turn 114. The length of the struts 112 within a band 110 generally increases in length from a minimum strut length 112a to a maximum strut length 112b and then generally decreases in length from the maximum length 112b to the minimum length 112a as the circumferential band 110 is traversed in its entirety in a clockwise direction.

Each circumferential band 110 within a stent 100 may have struts 112 that vary in length as compared to other circumferential bands 110 within the stent 100. Thus, the maximum strut length 112b of a first circumferential band 110 may or may not be the same as the maximum strut length 112b of a second circumferential band 110. Similarly, the minimum strut length 112a of a first circumferential band 110 may or may not be the same as the minimum strut length 112a of a second circumferential band 110. In some embodiments, the maximum strut length 112b of a first circumferential band 110 may be the same as or even shorter than the minimum strut length 112a of a second circumferential band 110.

All of the turns 114 at the proximal end 130 of a stent 100 may be in general circumferential alignment with one another. All of the turns 114 at the distal end 132 of a stent 100 may be in general circumferential alignment with one another. Interior turns 114, which are not located at either the proximal end 130 or the distal end 132 of the stent 100, may be out of circumferential alignment with other interior turns 114 that are located on the same side 120, 122 of the same serpentine circumferential band 110.



Each connecting element 118 may be connected at one end to a turn 114 of a first serpentine circumferential band 110 and may be connected at the other end to a turn 114 of an adjacent serpentine circumferential band 110. Each connecting element 118 may include curvature, and thus may include a peak 124. The length of a  
5 connecting element 118 may vary from the length of a circumferentially adjacent connecting element 118. Longer connecting elements 118 may further include a trough 126. Generally, a peak 124 may be connected via an inflection point to a trough 126. Still longer connecting elements 118 may include a plurality of peaks 124, and may also include at least one trough 126 or a plurality of troughs 126.

10 Curvature in a connecting element 118, such as peaks 124 and troughs 126, allow for changes in the span of the connecting element 118. A connecting element 118 that includes peaks 124 or troughs 126 may lengthen or foreshorten, for example during expansion of the stent 100. Thus, the distance between turns 114 to which the connecting element 118 is attached may be adjusted without sacrificing  
15 scaffolding support, and an inventive stent 100 may be adaptable for deployment within bodily lumens having varying degrees of curvature.

In some embodiments, the length of the connector struts 118 between two adjacent serpentine circumferential bands 110 may generally increase in length from a minimum connecting element length 118a to a maximum connecting element length  
20 118b, and then generally decrease in length from the maximum connecting element length 118b to the minimum connecting element length 118a about the circumference of the stent 100. In some embodiments, the length of the connecting elements 118 may be inversely proportional to the length of struts 112 located adjacent to the connecting elements 118.

25 As shown in Figures 7 - 12, the number of connecting elements 118 and the shape of the connecting elements 118 may be varied without departing from the invention. Any number of connecting elements 118 may be used between adjacent serpentine circumferential bands 110. Connecting elements 118 may include peaks 124, troughs 126 or combinations of peaks 124 and troughs 126. Connecting elements 118  
30 may span between turns 114 that are longitudinally aligned with one another, or may span diagonally between turns 114 that are not longitudinally aligned. Connecting elements 118 may further span between struts 112 of adjacent serpentine circumferential

bands 110. Connecting elements 118 may have any suitable shape, cross-section or thickness.

Figures 7 - 9 show various embodiments of invention stents 100 having different connecting element 118 configurations, wherein the connecting elements 118 may include peaks 124, troughs 126 or combinations of peaks 124 and troughs 126.

Figure 10 shows an embodiment of an inventive stent 100. Connecting elements 118 may include a peak 124. The arc length and curvature of a peak 124 may be substantially uniform between all connecting elements 118 of the stent 100. Connecting elements 118 may also include one or more straight portions 128. The length of a straight portion may be dependent upon the span of the individual connecting element 118.

Figure 11 shows another embodiment of an inventive stent 100. Connecting elements 118 may be curved along their length. The curvature of all connecting elements 118 of the stent 100 may be substantially uniform. The length and span of connecting elements 118 may vary.

Figure 12 shows another embodiment of an inventive stent 100. Connecting elements 118 may be curved along portions of their length. Connecting elements 118 may include portions of semicircular or parabolic curvature. Connecting elements 118 may further include a straight portion 128. The length and span of connecting elements 118 may vary.

Figure 13 shows an embodiment of an inventive stent 100 deployed in a curved vessel 150. The curved vessel 150 may have an outside portion 152 and an inside portion 154. The stent 100 may be positioned such that the maximum length struts 112b support the outside portion 152 of the vessel 150.

In some embodiments, a stent 100 may be positioned such that a strip 140 is located against the outside portion 152 of a curved vessel 150.

In some embodiments, a stent 100 may be positioned such that the minimum length struts 112a support the inside portion 154 of the vessel 150.

The invention is also directed to an unexpanded stent 100 comprising a plurality of interconnected struts 112 disposed in a tubular structure where at least a portion of the tubular structure includes struts 112 which generally increase in length to a maximum length 112b and then generally decrease in length to a minimum length 112a as the stent 100 is traversed all the way about a longitudinal axis of the stent 100 in

a circumferential direction. Examples of such stents 100 are shown in Figures 1 - 3. As shown in the Figures, the serpentine bands 110 are in general alignment with one another such that the struts 112 of maximum length in each band 110 are generally longitudinally aligned with one another.

5                   The invention is also directed to a stent 100 comprising a plurality of interconnected struts 112 defining a wall surface. The wall surface may include a strip 140 extending from the proximal end 130 of the stent 100 to the distal end 132 of the stent 100 as shown in Figure 4. The strip 140 may extend over a portion of the circumference of the stent 100. The strip 140 is characterized as having a plurality of  
10 rows of interconnected struts 112 which are of greater length than the remaining struts 112 of the stent 100.

                  The invention is further directed to a stent 100 comprising a plurality of interconnected struts 112 defining a wall surface. The wall surface includes a strip 140 extending from proximal end 130 of the stent 100 to the distal end 132 of the stent 100.  
15 The strip 140 may extend over a portion of the circumference of the stent 100. The strip 140 may be characterized as having a plurality of rows of interconnected struts 112 which are of greater flexibility than the remaining struts 112 of the stent 100. In one embodiment, the greater flexibility is achieved via struts 112 which are longer than the remaining struts 112 of the stent 100. In another embodiment, the greater flexibility is  
20 achieved by having struts 112 which are thinner than the remaining struts 112 of the stent 100.

                  It is further within the scope of the invention to modify any of the stents 100 disclosed herein by providing the longer length struts 112 with wider widths or narrower widths as well, as compared with the shorter length struts 112. Thus, the  
25 width of the struts 112 may increase and then decrease along with the length of the struts 112.

                  It is further within the scope of the invention to modify any of the stents 100 disclosed herein by providing any of the embodiments of a serpentine band 110 along with any alternative embodiments of a serpentine band 110, all within the same  
30 inventive stent 100. For example, a stent 100 may include a first serpentine band 110 having aligned turns 114 at the first end 120 and unaligned turns 114 at the second end 122, and another serpentine band 110 having unaligned turns 114 at both the first end 120 and the second end 122.

Any of the inventive features described herein with respect to any of the disclosed embodiments may be selected and combined to form further embodiments of the invention.

In some embodiments, a stent 100 may include struts 112 that are parallel  
5 to the stent longitudinal axis when the stent is unexpanded.

Any of the inventive stents 100 described herein may include a strip 140 as described above.

Any of the inventive stents 100 described herein may be provided with portions of lesser or greater flexibility than other portions of the stent 100. For example,  
10 one or both ends of the stent 100 may be more flexible than the middle of the stent 100 or less flexible. Further, portions of a serpentine circumferential band 110 may be more or less flexible than other portions of the serpentine circumferential band 110. Changes in flexibility may be provided by adjustment of the length of struts 112 or the length and shape of connecting elements 118. Changes in flexibility may further be provided by .  
15 adjusting the width, thickness and/or cross-sectional area of portions of serpentine circumferential bands 110 and/or connecting elements 118, by making them of weaker materials, or by any other suitable method.

All portions of any of the inventive stents 100 described herein may be provided with any cross-sectional shape, including square, rectangular, circular, ovular,  
20 triangular and/or trapezoidal cross sections.

Differences in flexibility may also be achieved by using any of the inventive stents disclosed herein as part of a stent containing other strut patterns as well. Thus, for example, it may be desirable to employ the stents disclosed herein in conjunction with more flexible stent segments of different geometry or less flexible  
25 stent segments of different geometry.

More generally, it may be desirable to employ the stents disclosed herein in conjunction with stent segments of different geometry in order to achieve other goals as well. Thus, the inventive stents disclosed herein may be used as a center portion of a stent containing segments of other geometries where only the center portion of the stent  
30 will be deployed in an area with a bend. Any known stent design may be used. Examples of particularly suitable stent designs are disclosed in US 20020055770, US 20020095208 and US 20020116049. It is also within the scope of the invention for the inventive stents disclosed herein to be used as an end segment of a stent.

The invention is also directed to stents 100 such as those disclosed herein arranged for sidebranch access. Such a stent 100 may be provided by omitting one more struts 112 and/or one or more turns 114 in one or more desired regions of the stent 100. Sidebranch access may also be provided by omitting a first serpentine band 110 and  
5 providing connecting elements 118 between some, but not all, of the turns 114 of the resulting adjacent serpentine bands 110. Sidebranch access may further be achieved in any of the inventive stents 100 disclosed herein by alternating the location of connecting elements 118 between adjacent serpentine bands 110. For example, where it is desirable to provide for sidebranch access, fewer connecting elements 118 between adjacent  
10 bands 110 may be provided. Any suitable combination of strut 112, turn 114 and/or connecting element 118, omissions thereof or modifications thereof may be used to provide sidebranch access. In some embodiments, omission of struts or connectors or modification of the stent 100 may be made within a strip 140.

The inventive stents 100 disclosed herein may also be used in bifurcated  
15 stents. The trunk and/or any of the branches may be provided with stents 100 having the novel designs disclosed herein. Any other stent of suitable design including those disclosed in US 20020055770, US 20020095208 and US 20020116049 may also be used in conjunction with the inventive stents disclosed herein to make a bifurcated stent.

Any of the inventive stents 100 disclosed herein may be provided with a  
20 uniform diameter or may taper in portions or along the entire length of the stent 100. Also, the width and/or thickness of the various portions of the inventive stents 100 may increase or decrease along a given portion of the stent 100. For example, the width and/or thickness of the serpentine bands 110 and/or connecting elements 118 may increase or decrease along portions of the stent 100 or along the entire length of the stent  
25 100.

The inventive stents 100 may be manufactured using known stent manufacturing techniques. Suitable methods for manufacturing the inventive stents 100 include laser cutting, hybrid water-jet/laser cutting, chemical etching or stamping of a tube. The inventive stents 100 may also be manufactured by laser cutting, hybrid water-  
30 jet/laser cutting, chemically etching, or stamping a flat sheet, rolling the sheet and welding the sheet, by electrode discharge machining, or by molding the stent 100 with the desired design.

Any suitable stent material may be used in the manufacture of the inventive stents 100. Examples of such materials include polymeric materials, metals, ceramics and composites. Suitable polymeric materials include thermotropic liquid crystal polymers (LCP's). Where the stent 100 is made of metal, the metal may be  
5 stainless steel, cobalt chrome alloys such as elgiloy, tantalum or other plastically deformable metals. Other suitable metals include shape-memory metals such as nickel titanium alloys generically known as "Nitinol," platinum/tungsten alloys and titanium alloys. The invention also contemplates the use of more than one material in the inventive stents 100. For example, some serpentine bands 110 may be made of different  
10 materials than other serpentine bands 110 within the same stent 100. Optionally, the connecting elements 118 may be made of a different material than the first and/or second serpentine bands 110.

It is also within the scope of the invention for longer struts 112 to be made from a different material than the shorter struts 112, or for the longer struts 112 to  
15 be made the same material as the shorter struts 112, the material having been differently treated.

The inventive stents 100 desirably are provided in self-expanding form. To that end, they may be constructed from shape memory materials including Nitinol. The self-expanding embodiments of the invention allow for a controlled expansion of  
20 the stent 100 as explained below. Typically, self-expanding stents are restrained on a catheter in an unexpanded configuration via a sheath. As the sheath is withdrawn, the newly freed portions of the stent will self-expand. Because the individual turns 114 of a serpentine band 110 may be unaligned, and thus extend to different locations along the longitudinal axis of the stent while the stent is unexpanded and sheathed, each  
25 serpentine circumferential band 110 will expand in several waves – the first wave of turns 114, which may correspond to the turns 114 connected to the shortest length struts 112a, depending upon serpentine band 110 orientation, will expand first, followed by a wave of turns 114 which are connected to longer struts 112 expanding, and so forth until all of the turns 114 have opened.

30 The inventive stents 100 may also be provided in balloon expandable form, or as a hybrid, having self-expanding characteristics and balloon expandable characteristics.

The invention is also directed to the combination of an inventive stent disclosed herein and a catheter. The catheter may include a balloon for use with a balloon expandable stent and/or may include a restraining device to restrain the stent in the case of a self-expanding stent.

5           The inventive stents 100 may include suitable radiopaque coatings. For example, the stents may be coated with gold or other noble metals or sputtered with tantalum or other metals. The stents may also be made directly from a radiopaque material to obviate the need for a radiopaque coating or may be made of a material having a radiopaque inner core. Other radiopaque metals which may be used include  
10   platinum, platinum tungsten, palladium, platinum iridium, rhodium, tantalum, or alloys or composites of these metals.

          The inventive stents 100 may also be provided with various bio-compatible coatings to enhance various properties of the stent. For example, the inventive stents 100 may be provided with lubricious coatings. The inventive stents 100  
15   may also be provided with drug-containing coatings which release drugs over time.

          The inventive stents 100 may also be provided with a sugar or more generally a carbohydrate and/or a gelatin to maintain the stent on a balloon during delivery of the stent to a desired bodily location. Other suitable compounds for treating the stent include biodegradable polymers and polymers which are dissolvable in bodily  
20   fluids. Portions of the interior and/or exterior of the stent 100 may be coated or impregnated with the compound. Mechanical retention devices may also be used to maintain the stent on the balloon during delivery.

          The inventive stents 100 may also be used as the framework for a graft. Suitable coverings include nylon, collagen, PTFE and expanded PTFE, polyethylene terephthalate and KEVLAR, or any of the materials disclosed in US 5,824,046 and US  
25   5,755,770. More generally, any known graft material may be used including synthetic polymers such as polyethylene, polypropylene, polyurethane, polyglycolic acid, polyesters, polyamides, their mixtures, blends, copolymers, mixtures, blends and copolymers.

30           The inventive stents 100 may find use in coronary arteries, renal arteries, peripheral arteries including illiac arteries, arteries of the neck and cerebral arteries. The stents 100 of the present invention, however, are not limited to use in the vascular system and may also be advantageously employed in other body structures, including

but not limited to arteries, veins, biliary ducts, urethras, fallopian tubes, bronchial tubes, the trachea, the esophagus and the prostate.

5       The invention is also directed to methods of delivering an inventive stent to a desired location in a bodily vessel comprising the steps of: using a catheter to deliver any of the inventive stents disclosed herein to a desired location in a bodily vessel, causing the stent to expand at the desired bodily location and withdrawing the catheter from the body. The stent may be caused to expand by using a balloon or by withdrawing a restraining sheath from over the stent.

10       The above disclosure is intended to be illustrative and not exhaustive. This description will suggest many variations and alternatives to one of ordinary skill in this art. All these alternatives and variations are intended to be included within the scope of the claims where the term "comprising" means "including, but not limited to". Those familiar with the art may recognize other equivalents to the specific embodiments described herein which equivalents are also intended to be encompassed by the claims.